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Full Texting of Selected Soviet Commentaries and News Items

1. Ever since the Special Reports Branch (SRB) of FEIS was organized we have been faced with the problem of attempting to plot significant trends and shifts in Soviet propaganda without adequate source material--that is, without a consistent, representative sample of broadcast texts to which quantitative content analysis techniques can be applied. The present trend figures produced by FEIS are derived by methods which represent only a stop-gap, compromise solution to the problem. These figures relate only to the most general kinds of content categories. Moreover, with the counting unit defined as a commentary, they are subject to a wide variety of unknown errors. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they shed only peripheral and indirect light on numerous particular problems that are of the utmost importance to intelligence producers and policy planners. Consequently, consideration is being given to the possibility of requesting full texts of a sample of Soviet broadcasts so that some or all of these deficiencies can be corrected.

2. The problem noted above is particularly pertinent with reference to any attempt to chart the degree of Soviet war-mindedness represented in the USSR's propaganda output. Such a charting, assuming some measure of correlation between Soviet propaganda and policy, is obviously of paramount importance. Millions of pounds are being spent in efforts to divine if, when, and where the USSR plans or expects to engage in hot war. It is entirely conceivable that Soviet intentions, etc., regarding these questions will be at least partially reflected in the stream of propaganda emanating from Moscow. Indeed, it is inconceivable that some of them would not be reflected in one way or other. This does not mean, of course, that such reflections would be readily apparent. It would certainly be naive to posit a one-to-one positive relation between Soviet propaganda and Soviet tactics. In the event of a Soviet decision to launch either peripheral aggressions or a third world war, for example, it may have also been decided to attempt to maximize the element of enemy surprise. But this very attempt would appear in some form in Soviet propaganda; and it is entirely possible that this attempt could be inferred by propaganda analysis provided that such a line of action had been included as one of the alternatives to which propaganda might be related.

The above problem is also pertinent regarding the reverse side of the coin--that is, regarding the degree to which the USSR may be moving or planning to move in the direction of at least temporary accommodation with the Western world. Recently, for example, there has been a report, well-circulated in the Western press, to the effect that Stalin is planning to face the West with a series of important concessions in return for Chinese Communist entrance into the U.N. and in order to forestall German rearmament and inclusion in NATO. The question that immediately arises to FEIS (as well as to all intelligence specialists concerned) is: what are the indications, if any, that may tend to support or confirm the validity of the report? And obviously, one of the first places to look for such indications is in the stream of Soviet propaganda, both past and present. Under present arrangements and methods, however, it has been possible to give only a very general, tentative, and inadequate answer to the question.

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3. The thesis of FEIS is that in order most adequately to infer the location of present or future Soviet policy in the war-accommodation continuum, as well as to answer a host of other questions on which Soviet propaganda might shed some light, it is necessary to plot trends and shifts on a more detailed level of content than that represented by the present procedure which only uses the commentary as the counting unit; and further, that in order to do so most efficiently it is necessary to have available either a daily sample of fully texted (verbatim text) broadcasts, with the sample rigidly defined in terms of broadcast items (e.g., texting of all Moscow's 0830, 1200 and 1800 shows, regardless of the importance of individual items) in terms of subject matter (e.g., all of the six most important daily commentaries about or related to foreign affairs and all of the news items now received in Newswatch material).

4. It is realized that the production of the first kind of a sample would involve a considerable departure from both SAC's and FEIS' current monitoring practice and that the second kind of a sample might be produced with less modification of current procedures. The second kind of sample, however, would be more difficult to define precisely and would therefore tend to represent a less firm basis on which to plot trends. The question then--assuming that either kind of sample can actually be produced--is one of determining the relative wastage (in terms of standards now in effect) inherent in producing both kinds of samples and of balancing this wastage factor against the other comparative difficulties involved.

5. To be more specific, our immediate interest is in a daily sample of Soviet domestic and foreign broadcast texts (both commentaries and news programs) on the basis of which we can make a detailed continuing study of Soviet war-mindedness. The recommended size of such a sample has not yet been determined; in part, it will be dependent upon what is most feasible from the monitoring-editing standpoint. The same remark applies to the kind of sample. As a basis for preliminary assessment of the problem, the following specific questions are pertinent:

- a. Would it be possible, and feasible, for London to send us daily the complete texts of certain Moscow domestic and foreign programs designated exclusively by time of broadcasts?
- b. If so, what would be the maximum number of such programs (assuming each to be 15 minutes in length) that could be so texted?
- c. What would SAC's recommendation be as to the specific programs that should be texted in order to give as representative a sample as possible of Soviet domestic and foreign broadcasts (both commentaries and news)?
- d. What would SAC's recommendation be as to the number of programs that should be texted in order to give as representative a sample as possible?

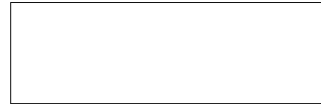
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- e. Would it be more feasible for London to send us daily the complete verbatim texts of all Moscow's domestic commentaries and news items and of selected foreign programs related to international affairs? And if so, how much more feasible?
- f. Would it be even more feasible for London to provide complete verbatim texts of, let us say, the four most widely distributed Soviet commentaries related to international relations (assuming that such commentaries are beamed to the Soviet domestic audience as well as to foreign audiences)? And also verbatim texts of all news items related to international affairs appearing in selected domestic news programs?

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